



FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Mountain Home Ridge Fuels Reduction Project
Chelan County Natural Resources Department
FM-5182-WA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program-Post Fire

In partnership with the Chelan Douglas Land Trust (CDLT), Chelan County Natural Resources Department (NRD) applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD) for a grant under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for a wildfire fuels reduction mitigation project. The HMGP is authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (Public Law 93-288, as amended, 42 U.S. Code § 5121-5207).

The project area is along Mountain Home Road and ridge less than 2 miles south-southeast of the City of Leavenworth city limits in Chelan County, Washington. The Mountain Home parcel is in Township 24 North, Range 17 East in Section 25. The purpose of the proposed project is to slow the spread of wildfire and reduce the likelihood of wildfire impacts on people and property. The project will reduce hazardous fuels on about 14 acres of land owned by CDLT in the wildland-urban interface area. The property is approximately 0.3 miles from the nearest home and less than 1 mile from the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery. The project area is forested with a mix of older pine-fir forest and dense younger stands. If left untreated, the project area could carry wildfire to other properties along the ridge and toward homes and businesses along Icicle Creek and Peshastin Creek, including the towns of Leavenworth and Peshastin. Thus, the proposed action may contribute to containment, reducing the intensity and extent of wildfires, which ultimately reduce the risks to people living in and near project areas.

The proposed action includes the following activities:

- Remove Douglas fir trees less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) located in root-rot openings on steep slopes.
- Limb trees up to 8 feet from the ground, or up to one-third of the tree height.
- Retain widely scattered large trees, and several foraging or cavity nesting snags where they exist.
- Retain clumps and strips of brush in strategic areas to maintain wildlife habitat. These will be approximately 30 to 50 feet across, 100 to 300 feet in length, and comprise 10 to 20 percent of the landscape. Vegetation to be retained would include scattered ponderosa pine and understory species such as serviceberry.
- Work will be conducted using handheld tools and chainsaws. No heavy tracked equipment will be used. Vehicles will access the site from existing access roads, including Mountain Home Road and existing logging roads within the parcel.
- The work is expected to take approximately 1 month to complete.

- CDLT staff will make annual visits to the property for at least 20 years to monitor whether regrowth has triggered the need for additional fuel reduction treatment.

FINDINGS

FEMA prepared an EA pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347 (2000), as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 30 §§ 1500–1508) and in accordance with FEMA Directive 108-1, Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Instruction Manual 023-01-001-01, Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA analyzed potential individual and cumulative environmental impacts from implementation of the proposed action and a no action alternative.

The proposed action, as described in the EA, will not result in any significant adverse impacts on surface waters and water quality, wetlands, floodplains, public health and safety, or minority and low income populations. Additionally, the following resources will not be affected by the proposed action either because they do not exist in the project area or the alternatives will have no effect on the resources: geology, farmland soils, visual quality and aesthetics, wild and scenic rivers, sole source aquifers, coastal resources, cultural resources, land use and zoning, transportation, and public services and utilities.

During implementation of the proposed action, negligible to minor impacts on soils, air quality and climate, vegetation, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and noise are anticipated. There will also be a negligible to minor short-term threat of soil and water contamination from equipment use. With implementation of conditions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts as listed in Attachment A, none of these potential impacts will be significant. In the long-term, the proposed action will have beneficial effects on several resources from the reduced risk of wildfire damage. FEMA coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and federally recognized Indian tribes with interests in the area to identify potentially affected resources and appropriate measures to avoid and minimize potential impacts.

The draft EA was made available to interested parties and the public for a 30-day public comment period from October 22, 2020 through November 21, 2020. No comments were received, therefore, the draft EA is assumed to be final and no changes will be made to the EA. The proposed action is the preferred alternative and selected alternative because the no action alternative would not address the purpose and need stated in the EA and no other practical alternatives were identified.

CONCLUSION

Based upon conditions and information contained in the HMGP grant application, the EA, and Attachment A of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and in accordance with FEMA's Directive 108-1-1, Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements; Executive Orders (EOs) addressing floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990), and environmental justice (EO 12898); the DHS Instruction Manual 023-1-1; and the CEQ regulations in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter V for

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implementing NEPA; FEMA has determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the quality of the natural and human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared and the project, as described in the grant application, the EA, and the conditions in Attachment A may proceed.

EHP APPROVAL

Science Kilner
Regional Environmental Officer
FEMA Region 10

Date

EHP ENDORSEMENT

Jackie Pritchett Jr.
Hazard Mitigation Assistance Branch Chief
FEMA Region 10

Date

Attachment A

PERMITTING, PROJECT CONDITIONS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Chelan County DNR and CDLT (subrecipients) shall implement the proposed action and comply with the following project conditions and mitigation measures and document compliance as part of the grant's closeout.

- Any necessary local, state, or federal permits needed to conduct the proposed work will be obtained.
- The following measures will be implemented to avoid and minimize potential harm to Endangered Species Act-listed species and habitat:
 - No treatment actions will occur during the critical breeding period for Northern spotted owls (NSO) (March 1st and July 31st).
 - All work will be conducted during daylight hours.
 - Approximately 50 percent canopy coverage will be maintained for NSO dispersal habitat.
 - Vehicles will remain on pre-existing roads.
 - Access routes into the work areas that are free of Wenatchee Mountains Checker-mallow (WMC) will be flagged for ingress/egress.
 - Pre-project surveys will be conducted in late June to early July to document any previously unknown WMC occurring within the project area. Any locations found to contain WMC would be flagged so that work crews are made aware of their presence, and impacts avoided.
 - Any needed refueling and tool maintenance will occur at least 50 feet away from any stream within the project area.
 - Despite only intermittent streams (type Ns waters) being present within the Project Area, a 30 foot wide no work buffer would be implemented.
 - One to three slash piles per acre (approximately 20 feet in diameter and 6 feet high) should remain to provide habitat, using heavy slash as the base layer.
- Woody material not used for wildlife habitat will be lopped and scattered in a thin layer to promote desiccation, thereby discouraging potential colonization by bark beetles.
- The subrecipients will implement the following BMPs pertaining to the use of mechanical equipment:
 - Vehicle run times would be kept to a minimum.
 - Any spills of fuels, oils, lubricants, or other hazardous materials during implementation will be contained and cleaned immediately.